

TRINITY XIII 2026 SERMON

The Parable our Lord teaches us today has become famous for its compelling picture of human compassion and charity. Even in everyday expression, when we find someone sacrificing their time, energy, or resources to help others, we call them “Good Samaritans.”

After telling the story of a Samaritan offering his goods to help a man in need, our Lord commands us in simple terms, to “go and do likewise.” He commands us to be Good Samaritans.

However, Jesus’ primarily Judean audience would first have to accept that a Samaritan can be a worthy model of righteousness before engaging in the practice of loving one’s neighbor.

Samaritans were an ethno-religious group descended from Northern Israelites who intermarried with foreign nations after the Kingdom split around 900 BC. They had their own Temple on Mount Gerizim, and a unique version of the Torah in the Samaritan dialect.

To First Century Judeans, these were religiously-compromised half-breeds, heretically worshipping God in their ramshackle temple with a distorted Scripture. When Jesus finally asks the lawyer to identify the neighbor in the parable, the man cannot even bring himself to say the character’s ethnicity aloud. Instead, the lawyer calls the Samaritan “the one who showed mercy.”

It is also revealing that the term “Samaritan” was also included in the list of slurs used against our Lord, along with “Drunkard,” “Demon-Possessed,” and “Blasphemer” (see John 8:48).

Jesus’ use of this despised archetype in the parable inverts His audience’s vision of who a neighbor really is. The Samaritan in the story offers his ethnic and religious nemesis his own wine, oil, and bandages; puts him on his own donkey; gives him a room to stay in; pays his fees; and promises to return to complete his restorative work.

While the priest and Levite (who are ethnically and religiously identical to the dying man) avoid the call of neighborly love, the accursed Samaritan becomes a truer neighbor, and thus, a truer representative of God’s grace.

This image reflects the description of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 66, who is likewise detested and rejected, but by whose self-sacrifice all of Israel is redeemed, and the Gentiles are welcomed into the Kingdom. The Samaritan, therefore, is a type of Jesus Christ Himself.

Indeed, God, who was at odds with a fallen humanity, took upon our nature, becoming our True Neighbor, inviting us into the very Love of the Trinity, healing our wounds, bringing us into the inn of the Church, and promising to return to complete His Restorative work.

And as Christ calls His People to follow Him, the Samaritan becomes then a type of the Christian, whom the world hates, but who offers his life for the life of the world. Our self-offerings must be rooted in God, and then extended to our neighbors. This is the flow of the Commandments Jesus gives us today as well: “To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself.”

To begin loving our neighbors means praying for those we naturally love, such as our friends and family, which will train us to identify with those outside of just ourselves. But we are also called to love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute us, because they are equally our neighbors in need of help; perhaps even more so at times. This means praying for them; for their conversions; for their healings; and for those whom they have hurt.

Even the simplest prayer, one that simply commends these difficult people in our lives, to the justice and mercy of God, will train us in the art of love.

But how then will this internal love manifest in outward acts? St. Thomas Aquinas rightly points out how the “love of neighbor” cannot mean that we love every person at every moment. That is impossible. We are finite creatures, bound by space and time, with limited energy and resources. We must make choices on when, how, and most importantly, *who* to love at any given point. As we saw in the parable, a neighbor is anyone in need of help.

We must identify those in most need of our individual callings and giftings. We do so by actively living in community. Those who depend on us most immediately—our spouses, our children, our aging parents, our employers and employees—stand as first neighbors.

We then consider the needs of our Church family—not only financially, but also in roles of service, mentorship, and leadership. Then our larger communities can come into focus. All of these require an active pursuit of seeking out others and how we can meet them. The Christian life is always one of “going out” and performing the works of mercy to the poor, the sick, the widow, the orphan, and the prisoner.

The vital grace in all of this is that Jesus Christ is the One truly seeking and saving, not us. Our love cannot be merely social; it must be firmly rooted in our hope and trust in the Triune God. The Good Samaritan was not planning on finding a half-dead man on his commute; yet he had wine, oil, and bandages at the ready. On that road, he was called to a neighbor he did not know even existed yet. We must likewise always be ready to love anyone, even our

enemies, if the need should arise. God will call us to these times. It is our job to simply be ready when that call arrives.

As we now approach Holy Communion, Jesus will come to us, who have been robbed and beaten by the world's trials and temptations. Let us receive His healing grace, that we may become Neighbors with God again. And *may our Divine Samaritan heal us, that we may go and do likewise.*

+ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*